

Subject: Porchfest and NC Budget
September 13, 2023

We are in the season of wonderful community events. This past weekend, the entire community enjoyed a well-done Dazzling Dahlia Festival. I want to thank the festival's organizing committee and the Highlands Historical Society for all the hard work and volunteer hours that they put in for this community celebration. It is a festival featuring the beauty of nature, and the gardeners of the plateau that combined make this such a beautiful place.

Sallie and I were so amazed at the concert and festival celebration at Founders Park on Saturday night. We saw many of our friends, neighbors, visitors, and fellow residents having such a joyous time, and we were really impressed with the children and older kids wearing those magical, illuminated headbands. As the evening darkness moved in, those lights reminded me of a thousand lighting bugs on a hot summer evening. Sallie and I both realized Highlands is truly the best small mountain town, as was recently featured in *Travel and Leisure Magazine*. The people here, those engaged citizen volunteers, make this community a great place to visit and to live as a permanent resident.

The next big community celebration will be this weekend's PorchFest. Sponsored by CLE, PorchFest will be a great time for folks to meander on Sunday afternoon around downtown and hear great music by musicians of many different genres. Like the Dahlia Festival, this event doesn't require the purchase of tickets or reservations. Just come downtown and hear the great music, shop, dine, and maybe sip some good wine. Everyone will be welcome, and it will be another time to meet old and new friends and our neighbors.

At the point of this writing, I am tracking legislative events in Raleigh. The state budget deliberations should be over at the beginning of the week, and hopefully, a budget will be approved by both houses of the legislature. I have scheduled both Representative Gillespie and Senator Corbin to be at the Community Coffee with the Mayor on Friday, September 29, at 11 a.m., at the Hudson Library. I know they both desperately want to make this meeting because if they can't, that means the legislature is in session in Raleigh. I speak for our representatives by saying they are ready to come home.

There are three possibilities once the budget is passed by the legislature. It will go to Governor Cooper's desk. The governor can sign it immediately, which may happen since the governor wants Medicaid expansion benefits to go into effect ASAP. Or the governor could veto the bill only to have the supermajority in the legislature immediately overrule his veto. The third opinion would be for the governor to do nothing, not to sign the budget bill, and if that happens, the final budget will go into effect ten days after its arrival on the governor's desk. That scenario would translate into the budget being final toward the end of this month.

I hope the budget gets approved as soon as possible. There are too many unknowns and delays, such as teacher and state employees' pay raises and Medicaid expansion financing. Also, I am waiting to see if Highlands is the recipient of any state funding. Stay tuned; the program is almost at a conclusion.